

OPEN LETTER TO ALL COUNCIL LEADERS AND COUNCILLORS IN THE NORTH LONDON WASTE AUTHORITY (NLWA)

We call on all councillors to:

- **Call for emergency council meetings before the contract with ACCIONA is signed on the 18th January.**
- **Make available their borough specific and independent assessments of the social, economic and environmental impacts of the NLWA contract with ACCIONA.**
- **Pause the signing of any contract until such impact assessments are completed, published and scrutinised.**

Dear Councillors,

We believe the decision of the NLWA to proceed with expanding the Edmonton incinerator is a retrograde step in the context of a climate emergency and a changing legislative framework on carbon emissions.

In fact, the decision relies on gaming the reporting of carbon emissions as well as going against the findings of accumulated and current scientific research on the serious and detrimental consequences of incinerator emissions on human health and on the environment.

The planet does not care whether legal loopholes allow the NLWA to classify carbon emissions from waste as zero carbon, as they claim. Emitting 700,000 tonnes of CO₂ a year would disgracefully fuel global warming. The atmosphere doesn't differentiate between biogenic and fossil fuel carbon sources. The harm to health is well summarised in the recent [APPG report on pollution from waste incineration](#).

It stands against reason that councillors on the NLWA chose to ignore the recommendation of this cross-party group of MPs on the 16th December, and the MPs who appealed to the BEIS and Boris Johnson, calling for a moratorium on all incinerator expansion and is beyond disappointing, given the context of the climate and ecological crisis facing us.

In truth, it is a mockery of the advice of doctors, medical professionals, environmental scientists, environmental engineers and community groups that have, in their own way, helped to establish the truth about real CO₂ emissions, real pollutant damage and above all the most important conclusion of the APPG report, namely a call for a moratorium on incinerator expansion.

Nothing embodies the application of the pre-cautionary principle better than this conclusion. We believe a direct vote by the residents (1.9 million) of the seven boroughs that make up the NLWA would see an overwhelming majority against the expansion. A petition against the incinerator, quickly amassed 4,000 signatures, achieving a far greater engagement than that conducted by the councils (1).

Sustainable waste management is based around the principles of reduce, reuse and recycle, in that order. Current recycling rates are stagnating at 30% across North London, well below the national average of 46%, when it is possible to achieve recycling rates of up to 70% or more. Therefore, the decision to spend £1.2 Billion on incineration is a false solution, it will detract from measures to reduce single use plastics, composting and moves towards the ambition of a circular economy.

Not only will it damage sustainable waste management, it will also divert resources away from maintaining clean streets and open spaces. The NLWA will potentially end up with a white elephant, a stranded asset, that will further act to encourage the commodification and profitability of waste generation at the expense of recycling initiatives.

This is not changing the status quo for the better, it is embedding all the worst aspects of our current setup for decades to come. This incinerator will entrench environmental racism, it will lead to the importation of waste from wealthier (and whiter) neighbourhoods who enjoy better air quality. It will be the largest single source of carbon emissions in North London.

Instead of making a real difference to the health and the quality of life of the people who live near the incinerator, a real opportunity has been lost. Instead of bold vision and action, that changes the status quo for the better, the vote for incineration has incentivised the worst aspects and excesses of the current situation. An opportunity has been wasted.

What was shocking and likely to be grounds for legal action, from the 16th December meeting, was that each constituent council failed to independently assess the NLWA proposals by considering alternatives.

We were expecting councillors to be familiar with a range of possible alternatives to incineration (e.g., an Advanced Materials Recovery Facility), rather than offering a false choice between landfill and exporting waste overseas. It was apparent that councillors on the NLWA had not seriously researched the alternatives by conducting a thorough scrutiny and interrogation of the NLWA proposals using their own independent experts.

That no impact assessments on the social, economic and environmental consequences of the expansion were provided by each of the constituent councils, showing how they affect their respective local climate emergency commitments, is a serious failure of councillors to fulfil their duties and obligations. There is still time to remove this lack of transparency by making these impact assessments public and open to scrutiny.

This lack of due diligence and independent scrutiny amongst the constituent councils, of the NLWA contract, suggests they have not done their homework, making the councillors open to accusations that they could not make the informed decisions they are obliged to by their fiduciary duties. This undermines the trust placed on them by those they should be representing and whose needs they should be addressing.

They appear not to have considered the health impacts of incineration outlined by Prof. Vyvyan Howard a key contributor to the APPG report on air pollution and who addressed the 16th December meeting. Indeed, one wonders whether they are afraid to look at the evidence? They also ignored the depositions explaining the 'low carbon' trick and arguments concerning value for money. Acciona only scored a total of 36 out of 100 in the procurement process. Similar sized incinerators using similar technology come in £150 million cheaper than the current estimates for the project. See the delegations made to the NLWA (2)

The NLWA does not appear to be accountable to anybody. It wholly owns the London Energy Ltd company that profits from incineration. London Energy has senior NLWA people on the Board, so it is not surprising their 'acceptable answer' to everything is to expand incineration at Edmonton? It thinks it can ram through decisions without considering the advice from health experts, from parliamentary committees, from their own political parties, from the committee on climate change and above all from their electorate.

The NLWA Board is made up of councillors who are frequently new, with experience in different areas to waste and energy. So the Chair and CEO of the NLWA can rely on them accepting statements about carbon emissions, capacity, air pollution and jobs that are regularly shown by independent experts to be false. Complex new information was submitted to the NLWA meeting of

the 16th Dec, requiring study and scrutiny. However, it appears that due diligence and scrutiny was not undertaken by the Councils at all, nor the NLWA Board members who were therefore not able to fulfil their statutory duties as councillors or as company directors.

The Authority seems to be run like a personal fiefdom. There are serious concerns about governance. Whilst other councillors come in and out, only sitting for a few years, Clyde Loakes has been a leading member of the Authority for fourteen years, unchallenged. Presiding over a decade of low recycling rates. That he, one other councillor on the NLWA Board and 2 senior employees of NLWA, are also directors of the private company, London Energy Ltd, that stands to benefit from the decision of the NLWA, is a conflict of interests. To quote Kate Osamor MP, "The personal ambition of a few councillors like Loakes has superseded the public good". Is he representing the interests of London Energy Ltd or those who elected him?

In a democracy, this disregard for any form of accountability must have consequences. Councillors still have an opportunity to right this wrong by calling for emergency council meetings to postpone the signing of the contract with ACCIONA, currently set for 18th January 2022. Members of Haringey council have already called for an emergency meeting on the 17th January 2022. There is nothing to prevent other councils from holding these meetings online, if needs be, given covid restrictions.

The signing of the contract by the NLWA will not end the campaign against the expansion of the Edmonton Incinerator. Far from ending it, it will only serve to broaden and deepen the campaign as more and more people become aware of the injustice inflicted on them by the NLWA. The councillors that have pushed for this decision are complicit in social murder and will face electoral consequences for doing so. This monumental act of injustice will ensure the end of their political careers.

This incinerator will not deliver on its promises, bad as they are. It will become an albatross around the necks of all those who backed it as delays and costs mount. The situation has changed dramatically since 2017, when the project was given the go ahead, following an inadequate consultation. Since then, we find ourselves in a climate emergency, in which incineration is a legacy of the past but remains an inexplicable climate anachronism in the present. Following COP26, expanding incineration is an act of climate idiocy. When the house is on fire why are we opting for more incineration?

Air pollution causes the deaths of thousands of Londoners each year, shortening life spans from a range of respiratory and other diseases. To countenance this incinerator in one of the most deprived communities in the UK, one that suffers more than its fair share of poor air quality, poor health and with the highest covid deaths rates is nothing short of criminal.

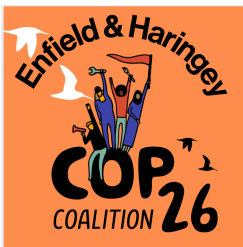
We call on councillors to call for a pause of any signing of contracts to ensure their legal obligations and duties are fully met. Because we stand on the side of climate justice and against environmental racism, we invite them to urgently seek independent legal advice regarding their part in the decision. There is still time to get on the right side of history, we hope councillors will recognise the gravity of the situation and do the right thing.

Yours sincerely,

Rajith Perera
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The coalition comprises the following groups:

Campaign Against Climate Change
Day Mer
Eco-Tottenham Collective
Enfield Black Lives Matter
Enfield Climate Action Youth Forum Enfield XR
Enfield Peoples Theatre
Enfield People Before Profit
Enfield Climate Action Forum
Friends of the Earth: Tottenham + Wood Green Friends of the Earth Muswell Hill
Haringey Climate Forum
Haringey NEU
Haringey Stand Up to Racism
Haringey Labour Climate Forum
Haringey Justice for Palestinians
Haringey XR
Haringey TUC
Haringey Cyclist Campaign
Islington XR
Independent Workers Union of Great Britain Cyclists Muswell Hill Sustainability Group
Stop the Burn
South East Region TUC Sustainability Network Sustainable Haringey Network -
Stop the Edmonton Incinerator
Unite the Community Enfield
XR Unify



References

1. Petition against the Edmonton Incinerator.

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/stop-the-edmonton-incinerator-now>

2. Live recording of the NLWA 16th December 2021.

https://camden.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/628391

Points of reference of the NLWA meeting of 16th Dec

26.01 mins. Video submission from Olivia Eken of EnCaf – young people have a bleak future

29.34 mins. Dr Ed Tranah – incinerating recyclables is discordant with aims to increase recyclables. Biggest impact councillors will have in lifetime re climate change.

Kate Osamor MP had submitted a written deputation but could not attend.

39.32 mins. Sydney Charles activist and retired from work with procurement. 52% of emissions (biogenic) have been ignored in claims of low carbon. They did not tender for a low carbon solution to waste, so did not get one. Councillors have not been briefed on this so not in a position to make an informed decision. Mixed waste retrieval of plastics and food/garden waste could be introduced quicker than the incinerator. Pause and Bring this forward.

48.10 mins. Dr Rembrandt Koppelaar waste professional. Point 1 how the figures for offsetting carbon from providing waste are wrong. Point 2 the bid is not Value for Money, as it is 20%-40% more than comparable recent contract. Point 3 Recovery from black bags is in place already and could bring in possibly £70m a year from selling recyclates. The failure example used to discount this alternative were not comparable. A 10 week 'Test before Invest' trial could be arranged to firm this up.

1hr.02.08mins. Nick Earls on health and pollution. WHO advice and cost to the NHS.

1hr 04.02. Vyvyan Howard Professor of Pathology. Detailed information on the toxic particulates and bottom ash and fly ash. Output from incineration more toxic even than from burning biomass. There will be health impacts despite measures around the regulated particles.

1hr 18mins 23secs. Cllr Charith Gunawardena Enfield Green Party Councillor. He knows that the councils have not conducted scrutiny or risk assessments. Enfield has spent £60m on Energetic so wants Edmonton to provide and keep providing heat. Environmental and cost assessments should have been done by an independent source. Pause to Scrutinise.

1hr 27.06. Malcolm Stokes Enfield Resident. Referred to the legal letter delivered to Loakes earlier, the APPG calling for a Moratorium and many sources of information regarding incineration. He believed statements eg about the Eco-Park are window dressing. He referred to the oncoming Government legislation eg mandatory food waste collections, pointed out that the NLWA should demand electric transport and not talk about landfill being an alternative. Deephams Farm sewage works are intending to provide heat to Enfield too. He called for a Pause and Review.

1hr 37.44mins. Iain Thompson. Pointed out that Acciona only scored 36 out of 100 points for the tender assessment. Including 4 out of 30 for Commercial. He was not against all incineration but, as this was £100m more than expected (at 2019 prices) and non-competitive he did not believe the bid represents Value for Money. <https://www.nlwa.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-12/03%20ERF%20Procurement.pdf> page 6 (click p20) has 36.06 out of possible 100 (4.13 out of possible 30 for commercial)

1hr 42.39min. Jenny Rowland Clerk to NLWA. Said that the item to be voted on was not on the strategy for waste, as that had been decided before. It was merely whether the NLWA should proceed with contracting with Acciona for this incinerator. She said that this has been scrutinised in Town Halls.

Councillors talked including:

1hr 57.40 Cllr Isidoros Diakides of Haringey. Not convinced this is Value for Money. Defer to examine improved offer. Will vote against.

2hr 12.21mins Cllr Mike Hakata of Haringey. Has this passed the threshold of doubt for him? No. [abstained].

2hr 15mins. Vote. 12 for, 1 against and 1 abstain so passed.